

OCTOBER, 1944

ONE SHILLING

# THEATRE WORLD

*This month: Scenes from "To-morrow the World"*



*Photo by Alexander Binder*

DAVID O'BRIEN

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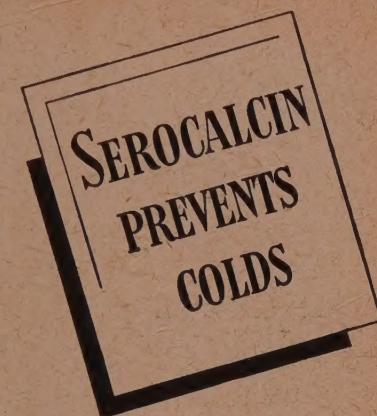


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# THEATRE WORLD



John Vickers

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# Theatre World

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Edited by Frances Stephens

## October, 1944

THE past month has been memorable for the opening of the Old Vic repertory season at the New Theatre. Few would have been bold enough to foretell the sensational success that has attended each of the three plays so far produced. The vestibule is packed each day with a seething enthusiastic crowd booking far ahead; the ballet audiences must look to their laurels!

With the flying bomb menace eased, if not yet entirely a thing of the past, and with the slight concession of dim-out, October should see the West End theatres flourishing once again, and the majority of them re-opened. The eagerly awaited repertory season will begin at the Haymarket on October 11th, with John Gielgud, Peggy Ashcroft, Yvonne Arnaud and Leslie Banks as the stars, and *The Circle, Love for Love* and *Hamlet* as the first three productions.

Esther McCracken's new play, *No Medals*, will be presented by Linnit & Dunfee, Ltd., at the Vaudeville Theatre on Wednesday, October 4th, with Fay Compton in the leading part. She will play Martha Dacre, a widow who has throughout the war years uncomplainingly slaved away at home caring for her daughters and a number of friends affected by the war. For this, in common with millions of other mothers, she has received no medals.

Appearing with Miss Compton will be Frederick Leister as a naval captain "retired and dug out again," Valerie White and Pauline Tennant as the two daughters who are in the Wrens, Ronald Fortt as a naval officer married to the elder daughter, Michael O'Neile, John Witty, Dorothy Hamilton, Helen Horsey, Thora Hird, and Robin Coles.

Richard Bird is directing. The play opened

## Over the Footlights

in Glasgow on Monday, September 18th.

On October 10th, the Daniel Mayer Company presents, at the Cambridge Theatre, Paul Anthony's *El Alamein* play, *Happy Few*, which was to have followed *Ten Little Niggers* at the St. James' in early July.

William Mollison succeeds Val Gielgud, no longer free from his B.B.C. duties, as producer; and of the original company there are Anthony Hawtrey, Derek Blomfield, James Page, Victor Beaumont and Maxwell Foster.

On or about October 26th, after preliminary weeks in Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Glasgow and Derby, Sir Cedric Hardwicke makes his return—he has been in Hollywood for as long as seven years—in Edward Percy's Great Plague of London melodrama, *The House on the Bridge*, under the auspices of Alec L. Rea and E. P. Clift, in association with Sydney Box.

GEORGE BLACK brings his new musical *Jenny Jones* to the Hippodrome on October 2nd. Adapted by Ronald Gow from stories by Rhys Davies, and with music by Harry Parr Davies and lyrics by Harold Purcell, *Jenny Jones* has a Welsh background. In the cast are Jimmy James, Carole Lynne and Balioi Holloway. The Palladium is reopening on October 3rd with Tommy Trinder in *Happy and Glorious*.

AS we go to press the Sadler's Wells Ballet Company will have begun their season at the Princes, while International Ballet have extended their season at the Adelphi until October 7th. *The Merry Widow* has come back to London at the Coliseum, and *The Lilac Domino* to His Majesty's. That delightful comedy, *Pink String and Sealing Wax* is also with us again, at the Phoenix.

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# New Shows of the Month

## "Tomorrow the World"

**A** FULL review of this play is given in pictures later in this issue. *To-morrow the World* is undoubtedly good entertainment and all London has been flocking to see the astonishing performance of a 14-year-



Alexander Bender

An off-stage study of Angela Glynne and David O'Brien.

old boy, new to the stage. David O'Brien's portrayal of a fanatical young member of the Hitler Youth Movement is nothing short of inspired, and his future career in the theatre will be watched with the greatest interest. Another 14-year-old, Angela Glynne, appears with him, and Elizabeth Allan, Robert Harris, Jean Cadell, Lilly Kann and Julien Mitchell, the adults in the company, bring much skill to the telling of the story of the effect of the arrival of a confirmed young Nazi on a kindly American family. There is considerable humour as well as many highly dramatic moments.

F.S.

## "Peer Gynt"—"Arms and the Man"—"Richard III"

**T**HE first three plays of the Old Vic's repertory are now running alternately at the New Theatre. The season has met with a tremendous response from the public, and the company's choice of plays has been justified to the hilt. Nothing has been spared in the production and costumes, and no finer group of actors could have been assembled. It would have been surprising indeed if theatregoers failed to respond.

*Peer Gynt*, that tantalising fantasy of Ibsen's which touches reality hardly at all, but fascinates at every step of the way, is presented in the grand manner with every trick of stage-craft to point the milestones

"To-morrow the World"—Aldwych, August 30th.

"Peer Gynt"—New, August 31st.

"Arms and the Man"—New, September 5th.

"The Banbury Nose"—Wyndhams, Sept. 6th.

"The Last Stone"—Phoenix, Sept. 12th.  
(Withdrawn September 23rd.)

"Richard III"—New, September 13th.

in Peer's epic journey to the grave. But not all Mr. Guthrie's skill with tenuous shadows and mountain mists would have succeeded without a Peer of giant proportions. Ralph Richardson achieves the well-nigh impossible with a performance that shrinks neither from the youthful high spirits of Peer, the mischievous, fanciful and amoral boy, or from Peer the disillusioned old man, finding as little heart in the universe as in the tear-springing onion. In between he gives us with equal authenticity Peer, the middle-aged, prosperous, cynical and self-satisfied, of familiar 20th century solidity. Most difficult of all Mr. Richardson has found poetry where the translator provided none, and where Mr. Norman Ginsbury's version does reach the heights, Mr. Richardson is with him to the topmost mountain crag.

Not easily forgotten is the death bed scene of Aase, Peer's mother. Sybil Thorndike gives a gem of acting as the world-weary peasant mother of a wayward son. Her journey to the gates of Heaven on the wings of Peer's imagination is the most moving thing in the whole production. The scenes in the Troll King's Court, with Nicholas Hannon unrecognisable as the Troll King and Margaret Leighton as his eerie daughter, and in the Mad House somewhere in the desert, have a balletic quality, due no doubt to Robert Helpmann's masterly groupings. Joyce Redman is a Solveig of ethereal simplicity. Grieg's music to *Peer Gynt* is far more familiar to English audiences than the strange journeys of the Norwegian Everyman, and to hear the lovely themes was like meeting an old friend in some strange other world.

One could almost sense the relief with which the company left the solitary heights of *Peer Gynt* for the warm, human inconsistencies of the Balkans (G.B.S. version) in *Arms and the Man*. This lighthearted and colourful production of Bernard Shaw's airy tilting at matters military and domesticity Balkan was reviewed in pictures last month and it only remains to say that Ralph Richardson, Laurence Olivier, Margaret Leighton, Sybil Thorndike, Nicholas Hannon

Ursula Jeans, Philip Hillman and Roger Livesey in a scene from Act III of Peter Ustinov's new play *The Banbury Nose*.

and Joyce Redman are superb in the leading parts.

*Richard III* is not an easy play to stage. For one thing humour is almost entirely lacking and for another the inner workings of the various court factions is confusing and inclined at times to be boring. All honour then to producer and company that this latest rendering emerges as an exciting study of a sadistic tyrant—undoubtedly England's contribution to an ignoble line of which we dare to hope Hitler may prove the last.

This is Laurence Olivier's play. As Richard he gives perhaps the most brilliant performance of his career, relying rather on a clever psychological approach than on the horrific effects of the exaggerated make-up so often adopted for this part. Indeed, apart from a "withered" arm and a slight limp, his only concession to the monstrous seems to be a built-up nose of mean nostrilled and acquisitive contours (in the same way he achieved his uncompromising look in *Arms and the Man*—but then noses have a new significance in St. Martin's Lane and district just now!). The other stars of the company have comparatively small parts, but it is in a difficult play like this that one appreciates the value of all-star team work. This is particularly so in the case of Richmond—the future Henry VII. Because of Ralph Richardson's masterly rendering the play reaches its greatest heights at the end. How often the climax is ruined because an insipid Richmond cuts so poor a figure beside a life-size-if-villainous-Richard. We hope to feature *Richard III* in pictures next month.

F.S.

### "The Banbury Nose"

**T**HIS play demonstrates without a doubt that we have in our midst a new playwright whose earlier efforts were not just the mere promise of a young prodigy. Peter Ustinov, in his early twenties, has a gift for the theatre that many writers twice his age might envy. The play has faults, but these are largely those of the intolerance of youth for age and tradition, and the inherent difficulties of episodic drama. In spite of brilliant dialogue, Mr. Ustinov's characters are inclined to overstate themselves, and outstanding though the acting is, it is not easy to make a personality live when his experiences of a lifetime have to be compressed into less than three hours.

In all his work to date Mr. Ustinov has shown a rare understanding of old age, and here again it is the picture of three cleverly drawn old men which holds our attention as the author traces their lives back from the present day over sixty years. Roger



John Vickers

Livesey, Michael Shepley and Hugh Burden acquit themselves magnificently in these parts and shed the sixty years from their bent backs with a nonchalance that is astonishing. As will be gathered from the pictures elsewhere in this issue, the play tells of the effect on many lives of a family tradition that the sons of the house should follow a military career. From the walls of the great hall of the old house the Hume-Banbury ancestors gaze down on the succeeding generations, each a famous soldier and each the possessor of the distinctive Banbury nose and of one or other of the inevitable Hume-Banbury Christian names. We see how three generations have been forced into the family mould; the first effective revolt coming from the present day son, who has disgraced the tradition by fighting for the International Brigade in Spain and by showing artistic tendencies and a profound contempt for the family name and nose.

The play has been directed with skill by Norman Marshall, and others in the company who give memorable performances are Ursula Jeans, Lyn Evans, Christine Silver, Isolde Denham and Alan Trotter. F.S.

Produced too late for review were *Felicity Jasmine*, a farce by Gordon Sherry at the St. James' (since withdrawn) and the American comedy, *Three's a Family*, at the Saville.

At the Lyric, Hammersmith, on September 26th, C.E.M.A. presented a revival of St. John Ervine's play, *Jane Clegg*.

## Revival of "Così Fan Tutte"

IT was a happy idea of the Sadler's Wells Opera, in its beautiful new home at the Princes Theatre, to revive Mozart's gay and exquisitely scored comic opera, and a still happier to give its light-hearted absurdities a touch of balletic stylisation. Sacha Machov's production has a *Commedia del' Arte* charm and the decoration of Kenneth Green enchants the eye with its spaciousness and clear, cool balance of colour. The revival is distinguished, moreover, by at least one performance of unusual musical accomplishment and style. Joan Cross, whose operatic appearances have been far too infrequent in recent years, sings as Fiordiligi with a limpid perfection of tone and phrasing that is rare in English opera, and her performance has subtlety and springs of true feeling that transcend the quality of the libretto as Mozart transcended it in his music. Like all truly great artists this loveliest of English singers is a mistress of many styles, and her Fiordiligi must now be added to a memorable Elsa, Sieglinde, Mimi, Desdemona, Violetta and Countess Almaviva.

In Peter Pears Sadler's Wells has acquired that operatic rarity, a tenor of musicianship and unforced lyrical style. Though as yet a little lacking volume in the *ensembles* he is, perhaps, the most promising English

tenor since the young Heddle Nash, fresh from Italy, startled the audience at an Albert Hall concert and won himself a place in the Journals of Arnold Bennett. The duet of this Ferrando and Fiordiligi, "Fra gli amplessi in pochi istanti," was Mozartian singing of the highest tradition. As Dorabella Margaret Ritchie sang sweetly in the upper register, but does not carry enough guns, either vocally or dramatically, for the mock-melodramatics of her great *aria*, and Owen Brannigan missed the essential cynicism of Don Alfonso. Rose Hill's Despina, however, proved a pert step-sister to her delightful Susanna in *The Marriage of Figaro* and John Hargreaves' Guglielmo was excellently sung though it lacked the liveliness of some previous portrayals (it would be interesting to see the mercurial Edmund Donlevy in this rôle). The whole production gives the impression that the Wells has put its best foot forward and sets a standard of execution sadly lacking in some other of this company's recent performances.

A.W.

Following the Opera season, the Sadler's Wells Ballet returned to London on September 27th for a ten-weeks' season at the Princes. The opening performance was *Coppélia*, and in addition to several revivals, a new ballet by Robert Helpmann, entitled *Miracle in the Gorbals*, will be produced in the fifth week.

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# “Tomorrow the World” AT THE ALDWYCH



JEAN CADELL as Jessie Frame and ANGELA GLYNNE as Patricia Frame.



ROBERT HARRIS as Michael Frame and ELIZABETH ALLAN as Leona Richards, his fiancee.

PICTURES BY ALEXANDER BENDER

THIS play by James Gow and Arnaud d'Usseau, which is one of the biggest successes in Town, owes its popularity largely to the astonishing piece of acting from the boy discovery, David O'Brien. Nevertheless, the play itself is good entertainment and presents the problem of the re-education of Nazi youth in highly dramatic form with very little obvious propaganda to hold up the action. It reaches London, of course, at the psychological moment when the question of the redemption of German youth is foremost in the thoughts of all those who want the coming peace to be a lasting one, but it does not solve this pressing problem, because unfortunately we shall not be able to tackle this reformation in either the best homes of America or England, but must face it, in the mass, in Germany itself.

However, the play does give a brilliant picture of the workings of the mind of a

boy perverted by life-long Nazi propaganda, against the background of American tolerance, and strange to say, leaves us with a deep pity for the young victim of a nation gone mad. This is all the more remarkable because David O'Brien spares nothing in giving us a picture of perhaps the most loathsome child the London stage has seen. His portrayal is flawless and not once during the whole of his long part does he falter in his broken English or in the tense fanaticism of his bearing.

Angela Glynne as a typically unself-conscious little American girl is a splendid foil to the German boy, and the adults in the play give unselfish support to these two clever child actors.

Firth Shephard, who presents the play, has once more demonstrated his gift for giving the public what it wants at the right moment. Marcel Varnel is responsible for the smooth production.



Patricia Frame is worried because her cousin, Emil Bruckner, who has come over from Germany to be adopted by his uncle, Patricia's father, has not arrived on the train. (Centre, Lilly Kann as Frieda, the Frames' German cook.)

(Below):

Michael Frame tells his little daughter that he is going to marry Leona. Patricia is delighted, but Jessie, Michael's spinster sister who has run the home for her brother since his first wife's death, is torn with jealousy at the news, and resolves to go away at the first opportunity.

(Below):

Emil arrives, having made the journey from the coast by 'plane, to the astonishment of everybody. Frieda, like the rest of the household, is more than ready to give this little blond orphan from her own country a warm welcome. (David O'Brien as Emil Bruckner.)



Emil begins to learn all about his new home. His uncle is a professor at the nearby university and Leona Richards a mistress at a local school which is run on experimental lines. On their side the professor and Leona discover with horror that Emil is a true Nazi product. He despises the memory of his father, a brilliant German writer who died in a Nazi concentration camp, and whose portrait has a place of honour over the fireplace, and when he learns that Leona is of Jewish birth, his reaction leaves no doubt about the thoroughness of his "Aryan" upbringing. He is soon repeating, parrot fashion, the tenets of his faith that "To-day we rule Germany—To-morrow the World."

(Below):

Emil defiantly makes his first appearance in his Nazi uniform and Frieda has something to say to this objectionable young German who begins to wear a perpetual sneer on his face.





Michael and Leona do their best to reason with the boy. Leona, who has a wide experience of problem children, has no illusions about her latest pupil, but Michael is convinced that a little kindly reasoning will win the boy from his Nazi beliefs. Emil, however, continues unregenerate, and at the curtain of Act 1 expresses his true feelings by rushing to the fireplace and deliberately slashing his father's portrait.



Ten days later and Emil, now the most hated boy in the neighbourhood, returns home after one of his frequent fights. He is the despair of Frieda and of Jessie, who had had misgivings about the boy from the beginning. Emil, on his part, has not been slow to size up the domestic situation and in true Nazi fashion is determined to cause trouble, particularly for his hated enemy the Jewish Leona.



The scene where Emil cunningly plays on Jessie's feelings in his attempt to bring about a rift between Leona and Michael. By appearing to relent a little, he wins the support of his Aunt.



Emil, who appears to have no sense of humour whatever, is an easy prey for Patricia's lighthearted teasing. He is very angry when his cousin refuses to tell him what she has bought him for his birthday present.



Michael once again tries to reason with the boy, and it begins to dawn on Emil that he can perhaps more easily get his way by appearing a little more polite to his American relatives, and he offers to mow the lawn.



Emil watches with keen interest when his uncle takes his bunch of keys from the drawer of his desk. The boy has decided to get possession of the key to the laboratory where the professor is conducting secret experiments for the American Government.



Michael and Leona have a long conversation about their forthcoming marriage which begins happily enough, but ends with serious disagreement about Emil. Leona believes now, contrary to her previous convictions, that only corporal punishment will reform the boy. Michael still feels that given time it is kindly reasoning that will rid Emil of his Nazi beliefs. He cannot believe that the son of his own sister and of Bruckner, the splendid philosopher and thinker, who laid down his life for his principles, can possibly be beyond redemption. Leona is clearly sighted enough to see that their life together with Emil as their adopted son would be impossible and she breaks off their engagement.

*(Below left):*  
Jessie is overjoyed to hear that her brother is not getting married as arranged and offers at once to cancel her visit to Mexico.  
*Below:* Emil indulges in another of his outbursts.



Emil has cunningly pretended to show some interest in one of his father's books much to Michael's delight and is here seen asking Fred Miller, the college janitor (Julian Mitchell), some questions about it. Incidentally Emil is interested to know why Miller, who is a German, is also eager to get the key of the laboratory.



Patricia has arranged a party on Emil's birthday, but just before the guests arrive the children quarrel about the key. When Patricia goes down to see if the birthday tea is ready Emil rushes after her with a heavy bookend from the professor's desk.

Emil, back again, is obviously distraught when the boys arrive and hand over the birthday presents that Patricia had given them to bring.

*Left to right: Tony Millen as Tommy, Billy Darren as Butler and Derek Lansiaux as Dennis.*





Frieda discovers Patricia injured in the playroom and rushes up screaming with the bookend in her hand. It is obvious that Emil had not intended to go quite as far as this, but that his fanaticism had got the better of him.



Michael carries Pat upstairs. She has received a blow on the temple and Emil, who must think he has killed her, rushes out of the house and disappears.



Early next morning Emil is dragged back by Miller. Michael who knows now about the key of the laboratory and has had a talk with Frieda about Miller's political sympathies, decides to call the police.

Miller who had thought that Patricia was dead is tackled by Michael and at last reveals himself as a Nazi working for the Germans in America. Emil, who had been taught to despise the American nation as decadent, is surprised at the way Michael outwits the German.



Leona hearing about Emil's brutal attack on his cousin, telephones to say that she is coming over and arrives at the moment when Michael, beside himself with rage and hatred, has nearly strangled the boy.



The tables are turned now. It is Leona who watching Emil's reactions in the new situation feels that there is still some hope for him, while Michael wants to hand him over to the authorities immediately.

Patricia, whose injury was not so serious as expected, comes down stairs and with childlike forthrightness heaps coals of fire on Emil's head when Leona makes him unwrap his birthday present, which turns out to be the wrist watch he had longed for.



Leona and Michael now make one more supreme effort. They talk to the boy and question him and cross-question him about his beliefs, and find at last that his own reason is beginning to doubt the truth of all he has been taught. He begins to wonder if indeed his father was the traitor to his country he had been led to believe, and he falters when asked to state again the dogmas he had been taught parrot fashion. Most hopeful of all he begins to lose his arrogance and shows some evidence that he is just a normal boy perverted by his elders, and not a constitutional inhuman little monster. Ironically enough, it is the Jewish Leona who has saved him when Michael decides at last to keep him. The curtain falls as Emil, alone on the stage, clambered up on a chair to replace his father's portrait which has just come back restored after the recent slashing.

## A Soldier Writes to the Editor

THIS letter from a reader in Italy is typical of many we have received from men serving abroad. It is good to hear with what enthusiasm productions from the West End have been received, and interesting to have yet further confirmation that our fighting forces prefer the worthwhile shows. Here, too, is a fine tribute to all our actors and actresses who have gone out to entertain the troops.

To the Editor, THEATRE WORLD, London.

I have been receiving *Theatre World* for some time now and never have I found it other than most interesting and informative.

Since I have been overseas I have had it sent out to me regularly every month and although that period is not of too lengthy a duration, I have been away from England long enough to realise fully what it means to be estranged from those things at home which are the source of so much pleasure, education, diversion and contentment of mind; the Theatre, of course, being one of the chief. Contained in that paper wrapper is all the colour and magic of the Theatre—especially the London Theatre and when *Theatre World* arrives I wait until one of the quieter moments of the day, then tear off the wrapper and the curtain goes up on the stage of any one of London's theatres. I am back in England, and the nearest thing to Italy is the "Gondoliers"!



.... Miss Desmond gave us her uncanny impersonations....

As you are the voice of the theatre world you may be interested to hear of stage events in this part of the globe. We have had some tip-top shows here. First of all I must mention *The Merry Widow*—that was indeed London's theatre on Italian soil! The first complete musical to come out—an unforgettable night! There were faults, but ungrateful would be the man who dwelt upon them, for this show was and will be the finest entertainment to come out to the troops in the Mediterranean, both in dress and presentation.

Before Madge Elliott and Cyril Ritchard came out in March, we had the Wyndham's Theatre Company in *Quiet Week-end*. Again this was more than a breath of the London stage and was "sold out" before the opening night. Both the *Widow* and *Quiet Week-end* were tremendous successes. Leslie Henson and his Company paid us a visit and revived delicious memories of the "box scene" which was so successful in *Up and Doing* at the Saville a few years ago.

Florence Desmond and her Company were here in April. Miss Desmond gave us her uncanny impersonations—and even achieved the facial expression of her victim! Miss Desmond received a tremendous ovation.

I must not forget to mention the ENSA Play Company (or M.E. Play Company) who at the beginning of the year gave us *Love from a Stranger*, *Lover's Leap* and *Flare Path*—the latter being their crowning success. The company includes Cicely Hullett, Jean Stanley, Charles Carew, Barbara Leake, Cecil Rhodes and others. These players are veritable pioneers and have toured Italy, playing for two or three weeks in most of the principal towns. They have done much towards helping us "to forget." They paid a return visit in May to give us Priestley's comedy *Laburnum Grove*. Cicely Hullett proved her virtuosity by playing the part of Lucy Baxley—the Aunt. James Bailey as the Uncle who talked of "out East" and who tried to borrow £450 from the Father was grand. He had a Cockney way with him and when, near the end of the play, he had to leave and walk to the station, his expressive tapping of the bulging suitcases with his stick was perfect.

During June I spent a week's leave in another town and on arrival I was surprised to see posters advertising Noel Coward's *Blithe Spirit*. I discovered that Emlyn Williams' Company were presenting the famous comedy. So on the first night of my leave I went along to the Bellini Opera House—and what a grand night it was. Emlyn Williams played the part of the harassed Charles—Ruth, his wife (Adrianne Allen) and the most bewitching of spirits, Elvira his first wife (Leueen MacGrath) were really too much for him. Madame Arcati (Elliot Mason), looking rather as if she were about to "declare the bazaar open" and without any more compunction, proceeded to arrange the seance that was to bring Elvira back to this earth and to Charles—and she succeeded without a doubt. Elvira

(Continued on page 32)

# “The Banbury Nose”

Scenes from Peter Ustinov's new play at Wyndhams Theatre which traces in brilliant fashion the effect of a family tradition over the course of sixty years, working back from 1943 to 1884. Outstanding acting and the clever dialogue of a talented playwright of brilliant promise make *The Banbury Nose* entertainment of an unusual order.



*Above*: The opening scene in the Great Room at Cheverne Abbey, a rambling old mansion in Sussex. *Left to right*: Roger Livesey as Lieut.-Gen. Reginald Hume-Banbury, eccentric and peppery head of the family, whose world is bounded by his military past and the contours of the famous Hume-Banbury nose; Michael Shepley as Major Strutt, an old friend of the General, whose fondness for the ladies has ruined his military career, and Hugh Burden as the Reverend Guy Saunders, another old friend of the family.

*Right*: Richard Wordsworth as Reginald Hume-Banbury, the General's grandson, seemingly the first of the line to fight resolutely against the family tradition, and Marjorie Eversall as Dolores, his Spanish wife.



*PICTURES BY  
JOHN VICKERS*



*Left*: A scene from Act II which takes us back to the autumn of 1920. The General and his wife Frances (Ursula Jeans) are off to a Regimental Reunion, but their grandson Reginald (Richard Hart) is not impressed when brought down to admire his grandfather's regalia. *On the right*: Alan Trotter as Lieutenant-Colonel Algernon Hume-Banbury, the General's son and father of Reginald, who has been forced into a military career by his strong minded father.

*Right:* The winter of 1900, twenty years earlier. Frances is consoling her mother-in-law, Selina Hume-Banbury (Christine Silver), after the funeral of her husband, another Hume-Banbury in the military tradition.



*Above:* A scene from the last act in the Spring of 1884. Isolde Denham as Caroline, and Michael Shepley as the young Strutt, at this time a young Second Lieutenant with a brilliant career before him. *Above right:* Ursula Jeans as Frances and Hugh Burden as the young Guy Saunders, who never had the courage to declare his love.



*Right:* Roger Livesey as the young Lieutenant Reginald Hume-Banbury, determined in 1884 never to become like his own martinet grandfather, but who as we saw in the first act, achieved old age in the true Hume-Banbury fashion. Ursula Jeans as Frances the girl, full of romantic dreams for the future, but who also was to become a victim of the Hume-Banbury tradition.

# “Revue d’Art Dramatique—1899”

by BRYAN MATHESON (who is appearing in “The Last of Mrs. Cheyney” at the Savoy Theatre).

**P**ARIS in the Autumn of 1899—a city of gaiety and also of stern artistic endeavour. The Impressionists are still in power, a source of irritation to some people and a fount of inspiration to others. Yvette Guilbert—vivacious and husky voiced—is a recently discovered “star” of the Café Concert, and the names of such great players as Duse, Coquelin, Rejane, Guitry and Bernhardt, figure on the theatre bills of the metropolis.

In some recently acquired copies of the *Revue d’Art Dramatique* (a periodical published in Paris at the turn of the century) an interesting sidelight is provided on the Continental Theatre of that period. Articles are devoted to the German, Italian and Hungarian Theatre as well as to that of France. And to one’s surprise, Paris, which is regarded as the centre of the artistic pulse, receives a stern reprimand from the well-known writer Romain Rolland for its tardiness in presenting Wagner’s great opera *Tristan and Isolde*, which was first seen by Parisians on October 28th, 1899, almost forty years after its creation. Why were Parisian impressarios so prejudiced against it, I wonder? Did they consider the music too modern and strident to appeal to the general public? Or were the memories of 1870 still too strong in most people’s minds to risk the presentation of a German opera? Political or musical considerations: I wonder which retarded the opera’s production.

On another page of *Revue d’Art Dramatique* the creation of a Popular (or People’s) Theatre is envisaged. A committee has been formed which includes such celebrities as Octave Mirbeau, Anatole France, Emile Zola, Henry Bauer and Romain Rolland. They have organised a competition in which they offer 500 francs for the best suggestions for the creation and maintenance of such a Theatre. The Committee has also addressed an open letter to the Ministre de L’Instruction Publique et des Beaux Arts, asking for its support. Unfortunately my copies of the magazine do not cover the beginning of 1900, so I do not know what success their scheme enjoyed.

In Berlin Eleanora Duse is ending her season at the Lessing Theatre; her final performance coinciding with Madame Rejane’s opening night at the Berliner Theatre. In his article, Theodore Engwer, while paying vivid tribute to the great actress’s powers is critical of her repertoire. Why, he asks, does she waste her splendid gifts on the more feeble works of Dumas? He excuses her choice of the play *La Dame Aux Camélias* (that had become one of the permanent works in the repertoire of every great actress), and directs his main argu-

ment against some of Dumas’ other pieces, such as *La Princesse Georges* and *La Femme de Claude*.

The same writer has a similar criticism to make of Madame Rejane’s programme which includes *Zaza*, *Madame Saint Genè* and *Frou Frou*. He suggests that the great French actress should provide the German public with a more catholic selection of her country’s plays. He cites some recent productions by Antoine and wonders why Madame Rejane should consider the Berlin public taste only equal to the works of Halevy, Meilhac and Sardou.

Some weeks later the paper’s Italian critic describes Rejane’s triumphal visits to Naples, Turin, Milan, Florence, Venice, and finally Rome where she plays *Zaza* to a public which has already seen its own favourites in the same role. The critic places Rejane’s performance far above the others. In fact he describes it as being “comme un pastel *aux auprès d’un tableau aux couleurs trop violentes*.” One can imagine the other ladies’ feelings on reading that!

Turning over the pages I come across an article by Louis Dourlian describing Molière’s first arrival in Lyons over three centuries ago. The great actor-dramatist had got into trouble in Paris and had even been imprisoned for a short while in the Bastille. When he was set free he decided to tour France. He first arrived in Lyons in 1653, and he and his fellow-players received such an enthusiastic welcome that they returned there each winter to recuperate from the continual strain of travelling; and would remain there playing to the Lyons’ public until the time arrived for a further tour. After five years of touring with an annual visit to Lyons, they finally returned to Paris.

It was in Lyons that Molière happened to see a man whose pharmaceutical appearance interested him. He asked him his name. The stranger told him, Fleurant. “Excellent!” responded Molière, “Your name shall grace the apothecary in my comedy. You will be long remembered, Monsieur Fleurant.” And twenty years later, Monsieur Fleurant achieved immortality when Molière wrote the great comedy *Le Malade Imaginaire*.

Within the confines of one article it is difficult to transmit to the reader the pleasure which I have received from reading these old copies of *Revue d’Art Dramatique*. The most I can hope is that the few extracts given will have proved of interest. The great names which appear in these pages have passed, but their fame remains secure in the annals of the Theatre—part of its great tradition. And soon Paris, in which that tradition flourishes, will emerge again—the hub of the artistic universe.



20th Century

#### KAY HAMMOND

Kay Hammond is appearing with John Clements in a revival of Noel Coward's *Private Lives* now on a prior-to-London tour. Miss Hammond, who will be remembered for her brilliant performance as the original Elvira in *Blithe Spirit*, the record breaking comedy of the war, which is still running at the Duchess, is also playing the same part in the film version of Mr. Coward's scintillating comedy. Jane Baxter continues to delight audiences with her charming performance at the Globe Theatre, where Terence Rattigan's witty comedy has now played for over 350 performances.



John Vickers

#### JANE BAXTER



Paul Tanqueray

#### RACHEL KEMPSON

Miss Kempson is playing with her husband, Michael Redgrave, in *Uncle Harry*, the perfect murder play which reopened at the Garrick on September 7th after its short tour in the provinces. Phyllis Monkman is appearing with great success in Adrienne Allen's part in the tour of *Flare Path*, which opened at Brighton on September 18th with Hazel Terry and Geoffrey Toone in the cast.



20th Century

#### PHYLLIS MONKMAN

BY OUR  
AMERICAN  
CORRESPONDENT

E. MAWBY GREEN



(Left) :  
Mae West and Joel Ashley in  
a scene from *Catherine Was  
Great*.

## Echoes from Broadway

MAE WEST, the lady of the hypnotic hips and the internationally beloved bust, is back on Broadway performing in her own play, *Catherine was Great*. Michael Todd, who has the reputation for getting what he goes after, is the producer responsible for heaving this super sex star out of Hollywood. That he has done right by her is most apparent from the lavishness of the production, which is unquestionably one of the most extravagantly beautiful we have ever seen for a straight play. But whether Miss West has done him wrong is a much discussed topic in theatrical circles. Immediately after the out-of-town opening, the report came in that Miss West was taking her acting and script too seriously. Instead of coming across with the famous Westian delivery of double entendres and chest and chassis manœuvres, to the amazement of everybody she was endeavouring to make out of *Catherine was Great* another Helen Hayes of *Victoria Regina*. The New York notices confirmed the above and the reviewers hurled additional personal disapprovals. However, despite this bad send-

off from the press, the second night was sold out and Miss West received a tremendous ovation on her initial entrance and after the final curtain was forced to make a speech, which is unusual for New York. "Catherine had 300 lovers," she said. "I did the best I could in a couple of hours." After watching this performance, you could only conclude that overnight she had forgotten her dramatic aspirations and was now eager and willing to be the old Mae West. Everything she did was in her grand manner as the first mistress of sex and the audience howled with delight. They loved her gaudy entrances; her personal appraisal of her army of men; her sultry singing of the song in which she says her men must be "Strong, Solid and Sensational," and the royal workout she gives the royal bed. She brings great fun to a plot to overthrow the crown when she asks for her peasant disguise and goes out and captures the rebel leader by seducing him, and there is real relish in her manipulation of Ivan VI, a contender for the throne, who has not seen a woman in twenty years. Of course the first woman he is

allowed to feast his hands and eyes on is Catherine and needless to say, Miss West knows exactly how to handle herself in such a prime situation. However, wherever there is a queen ruler there must be affairs of state and unfortunately for *Catherine was Great* they were not all disposed of in her boudoir.

Script changes are being made nightly in an effort by Miss West to satisfy her following. Perhaps by word-of-mouth she will be able to conquer the bad notices and get a run out of *Catherine was Great* for Mr. Todd. We hope she succeeds.

The cast of sixty, comprised of nearly all men, has been well chosen and performs competently under the direction of Roy Hargrave, but the only player who gives Miss West any real competition is Ray Bourson, as an effeminate French tailor in the Russian court. Miss West, looking regal and lovely, has been strikingly gowned by Mary Percy Schenck and Ernest Schrapp. She possesses an extraordinary stage presence and gives her portrayal tremendous vitality and variety. The timing of her lines and gestures is so uncannily accurate as to leave no doubt that she is a first-rate performer. The sets, which we have already praised so highly, are by Howard Bay. Altogether it is a lush and lusty evening.

*Song of Norway*, which was assembled in Los Angeles by Edwin Lester and created quite a stir, has been brought to Broadway and from the looks of the reviews and the line at the box office, this will be the first musical success of the season. This operetta is based on the life and music of Edvard Grieg. The book is by Milton Lazarus from a play by Homer Curran and the musical adaptation and lyrics are by Robert Wright and George Forrest. After seeing how beautifully the Grieg melodies fit into the operetta pattern, you wonder why this has not been done successfully before.

The story of Grieg, as brought to the stage in this instance, shows little originality and follows the old tried and true operetta formula. It seems the composer was the son of a fish dealer in Bergen. His best friend was a poet and they were both in love with the same sweet girl. She was in love with Grieg and they were about to get married when along came a famous opera star who discovered both Grieg and his music. She whisked him away to the big city as her "accompanist" and showed him the way to success. This went to his head and his feelings changed towards his poet friend and his home-town girl. Just when he had arranged to go to Rome to collaborate with Ibsen on *Peer Gynt*, his old friends from Bergen inconveniently showed up and his fiancee insisted on their marrying immediately. In Rome there was the usual wife v. opera star entanglement and furthermore he found Italy not conducive to doing his best

work. The untimely death of his best friend gave him a fresh perspective and he went back to Bergen to compose and live happily ever after with his wife.

It is hard to believe that the composer's life was as dull as the book of the *Song of Norway* indicates, but there can be no disguising the beauty and excitement of Grieg's music. It is sung with verve and freshness by Lawrence Brooks (Grieg), Helena Bliss (Nina, his wife) and Robert Shafer (Rikard, his poet friend) and the singing ensembles of the Los Angeles and San Francisco Civic Light Opera Companies. The part of the opera star is taken by Irra Petina of the Metropolitan Opera Company and she is about the nicest thing that could happen to any operetta. Not only does she possess a voice that can do full justice to the music but she is an excellent commedienne with a gay and insouciant air. Her performance is the delight of the evening.

The adapters of the music have employed more than 200 Grieg themes. Some of those linked with lyrics include: "I Love You" ("Ich Liebe Dich"), "Strange Music" from "Nocturne" and "Wedding in Troldhaugen," "Midsummer's Eve" from "Twas on a Lovely Eve in June" and "Scherzo" and "Bon Vivant" from "Water Lily" and "The Brook" of Haugtussa Cycle.

To embellish the book we are given the brilliant ballerina, Alexandra Danilova, assisted by the other members of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, in two ballets by George Balanchine. While these served their



Vandamm Studio

Mary Martin and Kenny Baker in *One Touch of Venus*, reviewed overleaf.

purpose, they were not Mr. Balanchine's best. We had hoped for a more inspired choreography to match the great talent of Mme. Danilova.

The settings by Lemuel Ayers are interesting for their vivid and picturesque backdrops. The colourful costumes are by Robert Davison.

Since *Blossom Time* (America's *Lilac Time*) has been and continues to be a great favourite, it is not unreasonable to assume that the *Song of Norway* will find a large and ready-made audience. Certainly it cannot help but find its way to London where the welcome for this Grieg operetta should be as enthusiastic.

Several awards have been made recently in connection with the current musicals which arrived during the past season. The one that reaped most honours is Cheryl Crawford's production, *One Touch of Venus*, affectionately labeled by the public, "The Mary Martin show." Miss Martin's performance was selected as tops for females in the musical field, and deservedly so. As the statue which comes to life and falls in love with a barber, she plays with accomplished charm and wit, sings enchantingly and looks desirably lovely in gowns by Mainbocher. She is the most beguiling and bewitching musical comedy star to hit Broadway since Gertrude Lawrence. All this is even more remarkable when you consider this is only Miss Martin's second New York stage appearance, the first being a big part which she made sensational with the singing of Cole Porter's "My Heart Belongs to Daddy" in *Leave It To Me*. In *Venus*, she has two favourite numbers of ours: "That's Him" and "Foolish Heart" as well as "Speak Low (when you speak love)" which she shares with barber, Kenny Baker.

Agnes de Mille, who has made all Broadway musicals ballet conscious since her fabulous success with the choreography in *Oklahoma*, got the award for her "Forty Minutes for Lunch" and "Venus in Ozone Heights" in *One Touch of Venus*. The brilliance and inventiveness of the de Mille Ballets have meant at least fifty per cent. of the success to *Venus* and *Oklahoma*. The premiere danseuse in *Venus*, Sono Osato, garnered another prize for the show by being selected the season's best female dancer. She is a highly skilled artist with a facile grace who brings to her interpretations a sharp comic edge that is wonderful to watch.

An award also went to Kurt Weill for his music which so perfectly matched the mood of the book by S. J. Perelman and Ogden Nash. Mr. Weill's melodies, as opposed to most modern music, wears well. His score may not strike you as all that sensational on the first hearing, but on subsequent hearings you become entranced with the beauty of it.

Kenny Baker and John Boles were also recruited from Hollywood to co-star with

Miss Martin. Both are ingratiating performers with excellent voices and with Miss Martin make a gay, handsome trio displaying a superior side to their personalities which was never captured by the cinema.

The settings by Howard Bay and the costumes by Kermit Love and Paul du Pont are in perfect taste and provide exactly the right background for this musical.

This production seemed unique in that all the pieces fitted so beautifully together. We have since seen it without Kenny Baker, who has returned to Hollywood, and the show has lost one facet of its appeal with the engagement of an inferior substitute. Now Sono Osato is gone and we are afraid to go back and see what she has taken out of it. All of which should serve as a warning to the London producer who will inevitably buy the rights to this Broadway musical hit. Unless the show is done in impeccable taste, he will see his hopes for a similar success evaporate before his eyes. The signing of Mary Martin and Agnes de Mille would be the first two steps in the right direction.

The award for the best male performance in a musical was bestowed on Bobby Clark in Michael Todd's *Mexican Hayride*. The short, cigar puffing Mr. Clark with his big painted eyeglasses has long been one of America's favourite funny men. In his present role as a numbers racket king in hiding in Mexico, he seizes every opportunity that the Herbert and Dorothy Fields book offers to be outrageously funny. Whether he is masquerading with a flute in a strolling band or tossing tamales from a stand as a Mexican squaw he is never less than wonderful. While watching Bobby Clark at his antics, it occurred to us that this is the kind of thing that London's Bobby Howes could have a rousing good time with. Here again the munificent Mr. Todd has not ducked dollars for his production of *Mexican Hayride* is a carnival of colour and top drawer talent. Cole Porter knocked out the tunes but scored only one popular hit, "I Love You," and Hassard Short took care of the staging.

Runner-up for female musical honours fell to Gertrude Niesen, who has been practically personally responsible for the success of *Follow the Girls*, which Dave Wolper presented with a book by Guy Bolton, Eddie Davis and Fred Thompson. Up to this time Miss Niesen had been known to American audiences mainly as a blues singer via night clubs, radio and movies. When she took the town with her unexpected turn for comedy in *Follow the Girls*, everybody became curious as to how she came by it. Research revealed that she got it in London in *No Sky So Blue* and *Bobbie Get Your Gun*. She has one sensational song number in her current success, "I Wanna Get Married," wherein she is called back at least

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# Superfluous Sonia

APPRECIATION BY  
ERIC JOHNS

Right: SONIA DRESDEL who has scored a personal triumph for her brilliant performance in *This Was a Woman* at the Comedy Theatre.

(Portrait by 20th Century Studios.)

WHEN an actress reached superlative greatness in the Golden Age of Acting the public usually recognised the fact by dropping the use of either her surname or her Christian name.

Eleonora Duse became "La Duse," Sarah Bernhardt became "the Divine Sarah," while Mrs. Patrick Campbell was familiarly known as "Mrs. Pat." Great ballerinas such as Taglioni, Pavlova, Karsavina, and Spessivva never appear to have had Christian names, or they were great enough to shed them at their first appearance.

Nowadays only music hall artists, such as Hildegarde, Hutch and Afrique appear under a single name, but I have a shrewd suspicion that before we reach the '50's, Sonia Dresdel will be robbed of her Christian name and referred to simply as La Dresdel.

In this actress the legitimate stage has discovered a remarkable artist who can easily take her place in the Royal Line of Great Ones. She is young, yet in possession of a serious outlook that rarely goes hand in hand with youth. Not content to reap easy money in West-End drawing room plays, she prefers to earn a mere bread-and-butter wage playing "Hedda Gabler" in Notting Hill Gate.

Sonia Dresdel is the first of her kind. She is not a second Sybil Thorndike, nor a replica of any other artist who has gone before her. There may be a slight suggestion of Edith Evans and a vague echo of Gertrude Lawrence in her work, but in voice, looks, and gait she is totally unlike any other actress ever seen and from the moment she makes her entrance she arrests your attention and holds you spellbound.

She is an actress first and last. She is rarely still on the stage, and some may consider she lacks repose, but for all that, she has an abundance of power and magnetism—which compels undivided attention whenever she is on the stage. She has not borrowed the success formula of any other actress to achieve these sensational results, which when applied to a suitable role can be nothing short of electrifying.

La Dresdel's amazing success in London with her entirely individual technique



recalled a story which Elena Gerhardt once told me about her debut in Berlin, when she was little more than a schoolgirl. The musical public were quick to realise that the voice of a lifetime was making itself heard in their midst, and to mark the event the music lovers of Berlin honoured the young soprano with a dinner party. The most distinguished critic of the day paid tribute to the more than promising artist who had made so favourable an impression on the occasion of her debut, and he hailed her as a second Lili Lehmann. By way of reply, the young singer leapt to her feet and cried, "I don't want to be a second Lili Lehmann. I am the first Elena Gerhardt!" And so it is with Dresdel. She is the first of her species. Others may follow her, but she remains the prototype.

Apart from her distinguished performance as *Hedda Gabler*, Dresdel reveals a flair for the macabre in *This Was a Woman* in which she appears as "Olivia Russell," who positively radiates evil intent. The role is an admirable vehicle for the display of her wide range of expression, since "Olivia" sets out not only to ruin her daughter's marriage, and warp her young maid; but to defeat and poison her docile but colourless husband. Finally she is despised by the man she had hoped to win, and is ruthlessly exposed by her own son. With panther-like grace, this striking actress manages to portray the slinking malice of "Olivia Russell" in such a way that her domin-

(Continued overleaf)

ating performance becomes as emotionally exciting as any study in abnormal psychology ever seen on the West-End stage.

I hope no young dramatist is at present writing a macabre part with Dresdel in mind for the creation of his masterpiece. Perhaps in some isolated outpost of Empire a soldier who saw Dresdel as "Olivia Russell" on his embarkation leave is now writing a play about Lucrezia Borgia, with a Banquet Scene that will offer more acting opportunities than the one in *Macbeth*. He can see this actress playing his fiendish heroine as Beauty and Evil personified in the one maliciously seductive woman.

While appreciating the enthusiasm of her audience, this serious-minded young actress cannot resist an occasional longing for the audience's sympathy. She is anxious to play a really sympathetic part—and one with plenty of tears! She wants to feel the audience on her side for once, and she would like to see a few eyes in the house being dabbed on her behalf.

If the soldier-dramatist wants to interest La Dresdel, let him turn to Mary Stuart. She has been the grand passion of the actress's life ever since she read about her in a school history book. She has read endless novels and biographies of the ill-fated Queen of Scots, but has neither read nor seen any of the many plays written round this ready-made tragic heroine. Dresdel feels she knows Mary Stuart better than any other figure, either in history or fiction, and she has furnished herself with a reasonable explanation for each of Mary's amazing actions. If a dramatist wishes to make his name by having provided the most interesting young actress of our time with her greatest triumph, let him turn his thoughts to the Queen of Scots.

Of famous parts already written, Dresdel is anxious to play "Magda" and Shakespeare's "Cleopatra." "Magda" appeals to her because it has been played by all the great tragediennes of the past and she is naturally desirous of discovering if she has anything new to add to the interpretation of this ancient warhorse. "Cleopatra" appeals to her because she is "all woman." In fact, Mary Stuart, Magda, and Cleopatra are all very feminine women, with their full share of human frailties, and each one is about as human a character as an actress could wish for.

They attract Dresdel because they are difficult women to portray. She has no interest in any part which is not difficult. She argues that if a role presents no difficulties it is not worth playing, but if it is essentially human and therefore essentially complex she finds it vastly interesting and a joy to portray.

She prefers playing costume parts and also characters older than her years, for the

simple reason that such roles demand more study and in consequence hold more interest for her. She would never accept a part which she could simply walk through on her looks. She would regard it as an insult to her artistic intelligence.

Like the prima donna and the prima ballerina, Dresdel never stops working. Her artistic life is one continuous study of the theatre in one or other of its many facets. She enjoyed *Hedda Gabler* more than any other part she has yet played because she still considers it unconquered, as far as she is concerned. Turning to the Classics, she has cast her eyes on "Medea" and "Lady Macbeth," but it is as Mary, Queen of Scots that she would prefer to be immortalised.

Will a new dramatist arise, or will one of the established writers decide to create a colourful vehicle enabling Sonia Dresdel to give us our most vivid impression of Mary Stuart, and at the same time enabling us to strip the actress finally of the beautiful, but totally unnecessary, name of Sonia?

## Echoes from Broadway

(Continued from page 26)

six times to restate her desire to change her non-marital plight. Other mainstays of the production are ballerina Irina Baronova, some stunning showgirls, the Howard Bay settings and the Lou Eisele costumes.

Oscar Hammerstein II got the award for his libretto and lyrics to *Carmen Jones*, a negro version of the Bizet opera *Carmen*, which has been magnificently brought to the stage by producer Billy Rose. Mr. Hammerstein has made Carmen a worker in an American parachute factory; Don Jose a private in the United States army, known as Joe; Micaela he called Cindy Lou, and the toroeador, Escamillo, has been transformed into a prize-fighter, Husky Miller. His lyrics brilliantly match this new mood and the Bizet music. The Toreador song now describes the excitement of a prize fight and takes the title of "Stan' Up and Fight," the lovely "Habanera" is "Dat's Love," and the Flower song blossoms out as "Di Flower." This will give you some idea of what is taking place in *Carmen Jones*. Hassard Short is credited with the staging, lighting and colour schemes, the latter being done entirely in the primary colours, red, yellow and blue. Raoul Pene du Bois did the prize-winning costumes and Howard Bay the prize-winning settings. The combined effort of these artists is a spectacular blaze of beauty.

The next important musical on Mr. Rose's schedule is a revue, *The Seven Lively Arts*, which will bring back Bea Lillie to Broadway, making this the most eagerly awaited event of the season. Alicia Markova, now acclaimed the greatest ballerina of her time, has also been signed for this revue with her partner Anton Dolin.

# Broadcast Drama by CYRUS ANDREWS

The first of a new series on current radio drama.

**Last Month**—the Shakespearean *As You Like It* was the B.B.C.'s main contribution to serious drama-on-the-air. Those who saw Edith Evans, as Rosalind, in 1936 when she gave the best performance in her career, knew exactly what to expect and were not disappointed. Possibly, though, for the microphone her treatment could have been a trifle less "stagey" with advantage. John Ruddock, too, disappointed somewhat in his lack of melancholy. And maybe Clarke-Smith was slightly too excessively British or Poona, as Touchstone. By the hesitancy of this criticism the success of the broadcast as a whole can be measured.

These minor cavils are easily outweighed by the praise due to Catherine Lacey who excelled with her just-right Celia, to Michael Redgrave, as Orlando, for his effortlessly romantic verse speaking, and to Carleton Hobbs for the marvellous new voice which he brought to bear as Adam in which small part he pointed neatly the Shakespearean subtleties.

**Next Month's** Shakespeare play is to be *King John* scheduled for the 27th. This is again arranged for broadcasting by Herbert Farjeon.

In the Saturday-night Theatre Series *Heroes Don't Care* of a very much lighter genre proved an amusing trifle. Constance Cummings played flawlessly the part of Lady Pakenham, the explorer's wife, but Roland Culver made rather heavy going of her lover. As Sir Edward Pakenham, Frank Cellier was a joy, causing many a listener to grin fatuously at their loudspeaker whenever he started on his many puerile pronouncements. Grizelda Hervey, too, extracted the maximum amount of humour from her part. For those who demand from their radio-theatre no more than an amusing diversion this rather slim comedy filled an enjoyable hour or so.

**—And This.** Regarded as a radio-play, as distinct from a broadcast stage play, *Phone Me* though only a playlet looks like being one of the most promising of the Wednesday Matinee series. It is scheduled for October 11th and is a new play by C. Gordon Glover.

Its subject and treatment make it particularly suited to radio technique of an advanced type. The play is an interesting study of the conflict in a girl's mind as she travels by train to meet her husband whom she is on the point of leaving for another man.



VAL GIELGUD

who is to produce *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* for broadcasting, is, of course, a brother of John Gielgud. (Portrait by courtesy of the B.B.C.)

*The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* is an old established favourite, adapted for broadcasting by Muriel Pratt who had quite a struggle to cut passages without unbalancing the play's structure. The play is only tentatively cast at the moment of writing, but I think it safe to say that Coral Browne and Malcolm Keen will play the leading parts, possibly with Jack Buchanan.

This play, almost a period piece now, is to be produced for broadcasting by Val Gielgud, B.B.C. Director of Drama, whose photograph, now beardless, you see above.

**To Readers.**—A parcel of *Theatre World* Back Numbers, addressed to S. L. Mullin, of R.A.F. Station, Rutland, has been returned to these offices by the postal authorities. If the original sender will furnish us with Mr. Mullin's correct address we shall be pleased to send on the parcel.

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## More about Ballet Rambert by AUDREY WILLIAMSON

THE Ballet Rambert programme at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, was marked by no less than eight revivals of ballets which were not performed at their previous London season. The immediate result of this has been to give this company a repertoire of unusual variety and extensiveness and one which does provide an interesting chronological *résumé* of English ballet, though since the greatest ballets of Ninette de Valois and Frederick Ashton, composed for a larger company, cannot be included the *résumé* is necessarily incomplete. Nor is the quantity of work so courageously reproduced always matched by its quality. A number of the ballets retained in the repertoire are frankly immature works created before the choreographer had attained full powers of expression or dramatic cohesion. The ballets which are complete artistic entities and unmistakably adult—Tudor's *Jardin Aux Lilas*, Ashton's *Mephisto Valse* and *Capriol Suite*, Howard's *Death and the Maiden* spring instantly to mind—are fewer in number, but it is they that hold the repertoire firmly together and represent the important achievement of this company.

It is necessary to emphasise this because it has recently been stated by another critic that the Rambert repertoire documents "the whole artistic history of British ballet," a statement which brushes aside the immensely rich repertoire of major ballets, from *The Rake's Progress* and *Apparitions* to *Dante Sonata* and *Hamlet*, created for the Sadler's Wells Ballet within the same period. These ballets represent the highest achievement of English choreography, though—let there be no mistake about it—the Tudor, Howard and two Ashton ballets mentioned from the Rambert repertoire are of a standard worthy of any company, large or small. In Ashton only, however, do we see the increasing and certain master. The revival of Tudor's *Descent of Hebe* has emphasised the extremely variable quality of this choreographer's work, partly owing to his slowness in finding his true style, that of psychological dance-drama. It is incredible that this inept myth, in which the story is devoid of dramatic progression and the dance full of inexpressive classroom clichés, should have been created as late as 1935, only one year before the masterly *Jardin Aux Lilas* and actually a year later than *The Planets*, in which the movement and groupings are far more original, flexible and expressive. *Hebe's* sole claim to interest to-day is in the striking décor for the Night sequence, though Nadia Benois' designs for the rest of the ballet are less attractive.

*The Planets* also is helped by a truly superb décor, in which Hugh Stevenson has achieved a fine sense of limitless space.

Though the "Mars" and "Mercury" scenes are not, to my mind, entirely successful—the first notably lacks the conflict implicit in the planet of War and the movement tends to be monotonous, unnatural and overstrained in its virility—the first, "Venus," has a lyrical feeling for the theme and the last, "Neptune," is better still, creating an imaginative undersea atmosphere with some fluent lines and movements of great beauty and musicality. The chief protagonist was very finely danced by Joan McClelland, a finished dancer who is also an artist of unusual dramatic range, grave and gay.

Frank Staff is a choreographer still to some extent in the immature stage. He has wit, but seems to lack depth or true musicality as distinct from facility of rhythm. This musical lack is very noticeable at some points in *Peter and the Wolf* and the dances of the Wolf and the Bird in particular call for far richer and more original choreography. Otherwise this is a merry and charming charade for children of which the outstanding features are the delightful Prokofiev music and commentary, the enchantingly-drawn Peter (Sally Gilmour makes an entirely convincing little boy) and the comic Hunters, now led by Staff himself with a dazzling absurdity.

Nijinsky's *L'Après Midi d'Une Faune* fits surprisingly well into this company's repertoire. It, too, was an experimental work by a new young choreographer who was inclined to let his dance conception pull against the music. That conception, with its Greek bas relief effect of figures in profile and emphasis on the arm movements, had original possibilities that still retain a rather melancholy interest, though without the Debussy orchestration the ballet seems a little monotonous and thin. Fokine's *Carnaval* makes far more technical demands on the dancers, and although the Baksht costumes look charming against the unorthodox green-curtained background there is no blinking the fact that the pattern and delicacy of the dances are lost in this performance. There can have been no more beautiful Chiarina than Sara Luzita and both she and Rex Reid as Eusebeus have a touch of the right style, but what has happened to the lingering attenuated loveliness of Chiarina's vanishing hand at the end of the *pas de trois*? Sally Gilmour's Columbine has a petal-like grace and charm, but one Columbine does not make a *Carnaval* and the neatness of her dancing only serves to emphasise the lack of polish and romantic feeling in her supporting dancers. In their own English ballets the weaknesses of this company are less apparent and both *Jardin Aux Lilas* and *Mephisto Valse* are so rarely performed that one feels one could have dispensed with *Carnaval*.

## Notes and Topics

# AMATEUR STAGE

THE loyalty of quite a number of amateur groups to Shakespeare is one of the more warming features of the non-professional stage. It demonstrates a perception of dramatic values, combined with a willingness to tackle the real work involved in the poet's language, that is all to the credit of the amateurs' account.

The Shakespeare Company of Braintree Senior Boys' School, Essex, throughout the war years and in spite of all difficulties, have continued to produce a Shakespeare play every six months. The Headmaster is producer, and the boys tackle all aspects of the production. Previous productions have included *Richard II*, *Henry IV*, *Macbeth*, *Coriolanus*, *Tempest*, *Twelfth Night*. Last month they completed a series of performances of *Hamlet*, boys playing Gertrude and Ophelia. The next production will be *Romeo and Juliet*.

Walthamstow Settlement Shakespearean Group provide an illustration of war-time adaptation. During the past two years they have given many performances of their productions which now include *The Merchant of Venice*, *Twelfth Night*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Midsummer Night's Dream*. The Company is strong numerically and possesses capable male and female leads. Also embodied in the Group is a small orchestra and a team of dancers, and both are effectively dove-tailed into productions. In the last Toynbee Hall Drama Festival the Group obtained the highest marks ever awarded at any Toynbee Drama Festival with scenes from *Twelfth Night*.

The Company have now been performing *Twelfth Night* for well over a year, and recently over twenty of its members took their holiday together in Devon, where they presented this production in the villages of Combe Martin and Benynabour. Difficulties were many owing to lack of accommodation, and at one hall the Company had to erect a complete stage together with lighting and curtains before the play could be presented in the evening. The villagers, who have had little or no acquaintance with the "live" theatre, gave the Group a grand reception and wishes were expressed that another visit later would be appreciated. A tour on a very much larger scale is anticipated for next year. *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is now in rehearsal.

The Streatham Dramatic Club now includes Mr. Ralph Richardson amongst its associate members, as well as Mr. John Gielgud and Mr. Gordon Harker. The club is carrying on under the direction of Mr. Peter Boyd-Cox, and the current production is *Old Acquaintance*. Application for membership should be addressed to the Secretary, Miss Eileen Harris, 16, Nuthurst Avenue, Streatham Hill, S.W.2.

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## A Soldier writes to the Editor

(Continued from page 19)

was really perfect—she glided across the stage with her hands bent at the wrist and fingers stiff and apart, and she had a little habit of opening and closing her mouth after she had spoken, which may sound rather odd, but most certainly suited her ethereal role. When the curtain came down at the end of the last act the applause was thunderous. Such an ovation is seldom received under normal circumstances from a civilian audience and I think the players were a little disconcerted at the terrific reception they received.

We are not, as some members of the press say, “entertainment-starved,” for most of us get a chance to see a film a week and an occasional stage show, but we are most definitely “quality-starved,” that is to say, there are very, very few shows of quality for the Forces here. This, however, was one, and the audience let the players know they thought so.

As you know, ENSA has a number of concert parties touring Italy—I have seen several and one cannot help but admire these hard working players. Some of the shows are really talented, but many are “blue”—very “blue” and nothing more. Of course in the Army we are all men together and custom and propriety go by the board, but when we go to our Garrison Theatre for an evening's entertainment we do not want this lower type of entertainment. Proof of this is seen in the terrific popularity of the shows I have already mentioned. Florence Desmond, who came out immediately after the close of *Hi De Hi* was, as I have said, magnificent, but the show was all but spoilt by the coarseness of the jokes which were put across the footlights of the Italian Theatres she visited by the “funny men” of her Company.

I realise that this business of concert parties has not got much to do with the real Theatre, but men are going to the theatres now, in the Army, who have never been before in their lives. What a chance to open the door to them—surely ENSA have something to answer for? So please, if you see Mr. Basil Dean in the Strand we do not want these concert parties brought down to the Army level, but rather let's see the people from Home giving us a decent show to remind us of the land we've left.

Well, here's to the day when the lights go up and taxis go bowling down the Strand to first nights, when the dressers sigh no more over worn-out costumes and when the *Theatre World* contains fifty pages and a carefree pen reviews the Victory show at the Palladium.

In the meantime, many thanks and best wishes to your invaluable magazine.

Yours truly,  
(Corporal) J. D. THOM.

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